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# AMERICA DURING AND AFTER THE WAR

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

1919

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MAY 12 1919

## America During and After the War

BY IGNACIO CALDERÓN

We all know that the tempest is past, and yet the world cannot realize the appalling tragedy that during more than four years drenched the earth with blood, made millions of people homeless and starving wanderers, violated women's purity and clouded the children's sunshine, filling their young lives with sorrow.

Many centuries of constant struggle for freedom have been necessary to redeem mankind from the thralldom of autocratic supremacy. The world cannot be turned back to the times in which the sword and the whims of one man were the law.

When it was hoped that the wonderful inventions that brought all nations closer together had assured peace and nobody suspected the impending calamity; the criminal ambition of the German junkers and their Kaiser opened suddenly the flood gates of war. The teachings of the herr professors, the preachers and writers have misled the German people into the conceit that it was their mission to dominate the world: *deutschland über alles*.

Not since Satan's pride brought upon himself eternal damnation was greater misery inflicted in the world. The lords of might have no conception of the transcendent power of justice and could not perceive how much stronger than force is the spirit of freedom in a contest for right. From the moment that treaties were turned into scraps of paper and all moral laws made subservient to the necessities of war, Germany lost it morally.

With proud confidence in the great military machine prepared and perfected by almost half a century of constant endeavor, the enemies of right started for the conquest of the world, sure of an easy victory.

The unexpected and heroic resistance of Belgium, that refused to become an accomplice to the criminal enterprise and defended her honor with glory, thwarted all the plans of easy victory. The enraged savage wreaked the most cruel vengeance on the unhappy nation. Mankind saw with horror the burning of towns, the wholesale murder of defenseless people, the revolting maltreatment of women and the torturing of little children in the midst of a carnival of incredible iniquity, the memory of which will remain as one of the most fearful visitations on a country defending its existence.

During the whole war Germany made itself infamous by the unscrupulous use of forbidden methods, such as poison gas, the sinking of passenger ships and other abominable practices. History will record them as the vilest degradation of human nature.

In the African jungles are found certain trees whose shadow is death for the unwary traveler resting under them. The influence of military autocracy has in like manner killed in the German hearts every sentiment of right, justice or mercy, and left nothing but hatred and degradation. The loftiest ideals of love and beauty, the noble impulses that open our hearts to understand and commune with all the harmonies of nature are the privilege of free nations such as the ancient Greek and Roman republics, who lived in the spirit of freedom and lofty ideals. Autocracy and force never produced anything but slavery and abjection.

The peoples of the American republics registered an unanimous protest against the German kind of war-

fare, and if some of the governments omitted the official sanction to the public sentiment it was nevertheless very clearly expressed.

A nation like the United States, founded, grown and wholly dedicated to liberty and right from the earliest days of its existence, could not remain long passive when, after repeated warnings against the growing disregard of the fundamental right of free use of the seas, Germany inaugurated the unrestricted sinking of ships and committed wholesale murder and devastation. In the name of justice and in vindication of its national honor, the United States accepted the challenge and took its place alongside of the defenders of freedom.

President Wilson, in his admirable message to Congress asking the declaration of war, made it plain that on entering in it, the United States had no special interest, aimed at no advantage or material gain, but was going to fight together with glorious France, free England and noble Italy, for the sacred principles of right and justice, to make the world, as he expressed it, safe for democracy.

Congress by practically unanimous vote declared war, and the whole nation by a great spontaneous impulse answered with determination the call of duty and sacrifice. It was a unique attitude and an inspiring outburst of love of right and freedom.

How noble the sentiments that awakened this Nation to put all its enormous financial and industrial power into action! Billions upon billions of money were appropriated, every factory offered to take the work of war preparation, and millions of citizens eagerly offered themselves to enlist in the great army of democracy, while thousands and thousands of devoted and heroic women went as nurses

to take care of the wounded and soften their pain with sweet and loving tenderness. It is no wonder the the world acclaimed President Wilson as the true interpreter of the aspirations of the oppressed, and the United States as the new crusader for right and justice. No nation deserves greater honor and merits more respect. The United States has glorified democracy by its decisive concourse in the war which brought the final defeat and humiliation to the barbaric invaders.

The war that has so happily ended leaves behind unparalleled distress and sorrow. Who can appreciate the desolation of lost homes, and broken hearts; the grievous memories of insults and hardships endured? God grant that the blood so heroically and generously spilled, and the bitter tears so abundantly shed, be compensated by the growth of the spirit of brotherhood, love, justice and peace amongst nations and individuals, bound together in one common endeavor for progress and happiness.

One of the most important peace proposals is the formation of a "League of Nations." A general and universally accepted and binding agreement on principles of acknowledged importance would no doubt be a very strong element to preserve peace. The respect of the independence and sovereignty of nations, compulsory arbitration of all international questions, the formation of a permanent tribunal to adjudicate them; the reduction and prohibition of increasing armaments, and such other principles that are of universal application, might profitably be the subjects of a League of Nations. The Old World has many complicated questions, concerning which we in America have no special interest, and which I think ought to be settled by the nations concerned in a spirit of justice



and self determination, taking into account their racial affinities and traditions.

The republics of the New World have no secular antagonisms or wrongs to redress. Having acquired independence by their own efforts after the long and heroic fight for emancipation, they inherited the sacred trust to preserve freedom and keep inviolate the legacy of peace, justice and liberty.

The Pan American Union is already a League of American republics formed to develop and encourage their progress and friendship. I think that its sphere of action ought to be extended to the settlement of pending questions by peaceful methods.

The only differences that threatened and still threaten the peace of the continent are the boundary disputes, but most of them have been already adjusted. Interpreting the sentiments of the American republics, Argentine and Chile erected 'way up on the summit of the Andes the famous statue of Christ with the vow of perpetual peace.

If there is one obstacle to the settlement of the still pending boundary questions, it is the wrong conception of national honor. Some of the most stubbornly contested of them are about out-of-the-way territories of no actual value. With the better training of public opinion, and a more sensible way of looking into those questions, their settlement would become very easy. I am confident that with the development of means of communication and travel, easier intercourse, the growth of commercial relations and the natural progress of enlightened public opinion, the day will come when the American republics, instead of quarreling about boundaries, will abolish them and form one great confederation based on the ideals that awaken in our soul the love of liberty, justice

and peace, and of whatever is generous, beautiful and divine.

In the growth and development of the various republics there has been a marked difference in their progress, increase of population and wealth; but that is principally due to special circumstances, such as more advantageous location, better facilities of intercourse with other countries and the influx of immigration. Internal disturbances, fortunately disappearing, have in no small degree contributed to the backwardness of some of the republics. Revolutions and military dictatorships have been a blight, but under the American league of nations they could be suppressed by agreements that, without infringing on the sovereignty of any country would discourage all irregular governments, and more especially the unfortunate practice of presidential reelection by fraud and imposition.

While in the Old World the so-called first-class powers have been a permanent menace to the safety of the small countries, and the doctrine of equilibrium and spheres of influence has subordinated the rights and national aspirations of the minor countries to the convenience of the stronger powers, the republics of America know not such dependency. The democratic doctrine of the equality of men and nations is the cornerstone of their existence.

It is a great credit to the United States that President Wilson, faithfully interpreting the sentiments of the Nation, has again and again affirmed the respect for the sovereignty of every republic, no matter how weak or small.

These declarations of the most powerful and rich democracy that ever existed is the solid guarantee of peace in the New World. All attempts to introduce in

America the system of forming groups of republics assuming the right to establish policies suitable to their convenience, is an attempt to pervert the basic right of absolute self control recognized to each and every one of the American nations.

If there is one sentiment that is most universally and more deeply cherished in the republics of America, it is the love of their independence and sovereignty.

The unfortunate designation by some writers of the so-called A. B. C. powers, in the sense of superiority, is something that we absolutely repudiate as an attempt to create distinctions, apt to foment a policy of discord and rivalry. We are convinced that the whole alphabet of the republics form a union of equally sovereign and democratic nations, whose ideals are mutual respect, right and liberty.

When the greatest free democracy of the world has so brightly illuminated the splendor of the stars of its unbeaten flag fighting for the freedom of the oppressed nations, there is no room in our America for other principles than those that President Wilson has proclaimed as the creed of the people of the United States, and the whole world is eagerly making its own.

The war with all its horrors has been like a destructive cyclone, that, while leaving in its path desolation and ruins, purifies the air, awakening dormant energies that call for a common effort and mutual help.

I will state in conclusion that it is my belief that the true brotherhood of man will come only when we instill in every child's mind, in the heart and soul of every man and woman, the conviction that love, liberty and justice are the highest ideals that make life worth living and represent the true conception of our mission on earth. It will then be easy to form a real league and a brotherhood of man and nations,

all united in a league of hearts in the hope of seeing the dawn of that era of peace and good will, of freedom and justice, for which many millions of brave soldiers have given their lives so gloriously.

Let us hope, not in vain.

*December 28, 1918.*



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